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THE RETURN OF **POLITICAL POETRY**
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IS GOD 'SHE'? AND SO WHAT?
TRUDE WEISS-ROSMARIN

STRAVINSKY'S SACRED MUSIC
RALPH THIBODEAU

OF MITES AND MONSTERS
COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

BOOKS THE NEW RELIGIONS, LION COUNTRY, THE ANGELICA, FREAKSHOW, BRAZIL'S RADICALS

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CORRESPONDENCE

De-fragging Louis Evely

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: John McKenzie's recent article on the "Demythologizing of Louis Evely" (June 11) was both a significant contribution in terms of the central issue which he wishes to join with Louis Evely, and yet desperately disappointing in its 'secondary' aspects. The main issue: namely, that in stripping the archaic features of the symbol the modern mind tends to evacuate the content of the symbol as well, is true and very important, and McKenzie has rightfully recalled us to the essentially symbolic or 'mythological' character of religious truth, precisely because it is a truth which lies beyond the border of our conceptual powers. Nevertheless the article largely destroyed the impact of this important truth by making the point with a style aimed at 'fragging' Louis Evely's soul (if I may borrow a term from current military jargon).

I would like to make two points about McKenzie's response. First of all, he fails to deal adequately with the 'frightened rabbit' issue. It is true that demythologizing has been around a while, and Catholic exegetes have been cautiously stealing a little of this Protestant elixir for some time, but the point is that they haven't told very many Catholics about it, and so they have operated to prolong the communications gap between theologian and church which Protestant exegetes have already been creating for some time. Recent Catholic reform has been extraordinary in its failure to even begin to deal with the issue of faith, which was, at least, central in the Modernist crisis a generation before. Evely has, at least, begun to try to bridge the gap between what exegetes have known for a long time and the pre-critical faith of the man-in-the-pew.

Secondly, McKenzie's article is remarkable in failing to deal with Evely as a fellow Christian who, like himself, is seeking truth. Although he trumpets his own need for an 'ecclesial faith' and 'fellow Christians,' Evely is immediately placed beyond the pale of the church and then almost beyond the pale of humanity itself, with various remarks about 'grunts' and 'sows.' This is not a failure of a 'conservative' who is now dealing with Evely, as Rahner dealt with Küng, because it is a failure of which radicals are equally prone. But it is, nevertheless, intolerable. By failing to deal with Evely in a spirit of dialogue and mutual respect, McKenzie thus fails in his signal opportunity to lead us constructively into a Catholicism which can retain the essential message while absorbing whatever critical historical studies has to bring, and to set useful guidelines for that development, but rather leaves the impression of a protective jealousy in the sacred precincts that confirms the feeling of many people that they probably are being tricked.

ROSEMARY RUETHER

Auburn, N.Y.

To the Editors: Father McKenzie [June 11] displays an indifference to Evely's humanity and love. Pity.

And what about your tasteless attempt on the cover "Does this man look worried? He should. See . . ."

Come on . . . you can do better in both departments. Keep trying.

DONALD A. LAWLER

Camp Springs, Md.

To the Editors: Father McKenzie's article on Evely [June 11] was way overdone. Evely's work in *Demythologizing the Gospels* is clearly not to be regarded as a theological treatise, anymore than his equally good *Prayer of a Modern Man*. He is good at provoking thought among laymen like me. After all, McKenzie's own popular works can do no more than that.

It seems clear to me that we are not going to have available a modern Summa for a long time. Till then we Catholics must learn to have faith without "airtight" apologetics. . . .

JOSEPH P. GERRITY, JR.

REPLY: I have to answer Mrs. Ruether's complaint about the failure of Catholic exegetes to deal with demythologizing by a reference to my own writings because the library resources are not available for me to do it quickly with complete references. The writings I mention were written no later than 1965; I am working from memory. In *The Power and the Wisdom* I gave Bultmann a chapter and the character of New Testament history several extended passages. For *The Month*, published by the English Jesuits, I wrote a three part series on Bultmann. *The Month* is foreign but scarcely recondite; and it is worth mentioning that the series was done at the request of the editors. I contributed an essay to a symposium on Bultmann edited by Bernhard W. Anderson, published, I think, by that obscure house, Harper & Row. This is not bad for a man whose major work and interest is Old Testament rather than New Testament. All I can do is publish the stuff; I cannot compel either Evely or Mrs. Ruether to read it, but I can respond to the charge that Catholics have ignored Bultmann. Evely has not convinced me that he reads either English or German, and I do not see much evidence of his reading in French. Some German colleagues once quoted to me Bultmann as saying that of all his critics the French Jesuit René Marlé understood him best. Evely does not mention Marle. His treatment of Bultmann and mine were critical and sympathetic. We do not believe that an uncritical acceptance of Bultmann—like Evely—is any more to be recommended than an uncritical rejection. Evely has not shown that he is capable of critical discussion in either direction. Protestants have been loudly critical in large numbers; I risk being snide in referring to the five volumes of Bartzsch of collected reviews and essays, mostly critical and hostile (and in German). But this is the sort of reading one must do if one wishes to do Bultmann in depth. Some German wags have asked whether Bultmann himself did not become post-Bultmann. If Mrs. Ruether will take the trouble to look up my work, she may find another name for it than "cautious

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stealing of a little of this Protestant elixir." It will probably take more reading than that to suggest that what she calls "protective jealousy in the sacred precincts" may be a concern for the honesty and integrity of biblical studies.

Her second complaint is that I did not deal with Evely as a fellow Christian, and I think that I can lump this with Mr. Donald Lawler's remark about my indifference to Evely's humanity and love. I dealt neither with the presence nor the absence of these admirable qualities because I regard such discussion as personal. You may stipulate that Evely has more authentic Christian virtue in his little finger than I have in my fat head, to steal a remark of my own from another context. I was not reviewing his humanity or his love, I was reviewing his book, which he wrote without doing his homework.

Mr. Gerrity pleads that the book is, after all, not a theological treatise. He will have to find another name for it, because that is what it looks like. That one popularizes does not excuse one from doing the reading; and it is possible to stimulate thought without misleading the thinker.

JOHN L. MCKENZIE

Why I Didn't Go to Jail

To the Editors: Listening to Anthony Scoblick describing some of the intricacies of the current Harrisburg trial the other evening at a college campus center, I was puzzled by the persistence of the presiding academic dean in an opinion one would have thought hardly tenable today—at least by a convinced and committed Catholic: namely (as the all too familiar refrain is still repeated) "We must remain within the law. . . . The Berrigans, much as we may admire them as fellow-priests and sincere men, have not done this."

I had to think of Peter Steinfels' explanation to his five-year-old daughter: "Sometimes people have to make a fuss about the war." [*Commonweal*, April 23, 1971: "Why I Went To Jail."] Because when I first read Steinfels' ex-

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'MURDER BY NEGLECT'

In one way the problem of lead poisoning in children is a small one. It is not without genuine pathos for those who come in contact with its victims, but it lacks the sweep and drama of the Vietnam war or the fate of a supersonic transport or even the elimination of a whole species of bird or animal in the ecological squeeze. Yet in some ways the lead poisoning problem offers a more accurate index of our national priorities than any of these things.

The first thing to note, perhaps, is that the lead poisoning question involves not just a child here or there but an estimated four hundred thousand of them. All are endangered by this strange urban "disease," a deadly hazard for those children who eat chips of lead-based paint as it flakes off walls and woodwork in old apartments. Exactly why children eat these chips is not known, although some speculate that it may reflect same dietary lack, but one point is clear: children do in fact eat the paint chips, and a relative few of these daily over a short period of time can cause death or permanent damage to the brain. Congressman William F. Ryan of New York is quoted in the *Times* as saying that about 200 children die each year from lead poisoning and that about 800 others suffer such severe brain damage that they must be cared for in institutions for the rest of their lives, at an annual cost of more than $3 million. Another $5.6 million a year is spent to care for the several thousand other children who suffer less severe aftereffects.

The lead poisoning problem is thought to exist in almost every American city, and most have no organized program to deal with it. What is needed is not simple repainting but a scraping away of all the layers of lead-based paint accumulated over the years, then repainting with lead-free paint. The problem is extensive, and it is one that slum landlords have shown themselves unwilling or unable to cope with. It is for this reason that Congressman Ryan introduced a bill last year authorizing a $25 million effort to fight lead poisoning. The Administration was reluctant to spend this kind of money, however, and has now asked Congressional authorization not for $25 million but for $2 million—not even enough for one good fighter-bomber and less than the amount that New York City alone spends just on lead-poisoning case-finding and inspection.

How is one to describe this approach to a problem that condemns

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hundreds of children to lingering death and others to just-less-than-fatal brain damage and life ever after in a vegetable state? What is one to say about official reluctance to spend what Congress is willing to appropriate for this matter? One doctor who testified in the matter called the Administration's conduct "obscene" and an "act of murder by neglect." This sounds, perhaps, like a harsh judgment, but it is not one we can quarrel with. In the total catalogue of the world's ills, the lead poisoning problem may be relatively small, but it is a problem of manageable size and one on which official reaction may tell us a great deal about ourselves. Are we about to demonstrate that we care no more about thousands of children in American slums than we do about other thousands of children in Vietnamese villages? The decision soon to be made in Congress and the Administration reaction to it will provide the answer.

The Greening of the Laity

The National Association of Laity (notice the new name; liberation-of-women sentiment insisted on replacing "laymen") is now in its fifth year of life. In late June it convened its fourth major convention at Fordham University. Charles-Reich-oriented delegates nicknamed it Con IV, a cognomen made even more apt by the chairman of the convention, Zil Groux, who opened the three-day event by welcoming the more-than-400 delegates to "the Greening of NAL."

Liberal Catholic laity are in a stage of what might be called the beginning of their maturity, if one is to judge from those who appeared at Con IV to represent their membership in 30 affiliates in continental U.S.—and now Hawaii; a stalwart crew of three sunburned representatives flew in from there to represent that racially troubled island for the first time. They are no longer disturbed by their relations with episcopacy, with the Vatican, with Father, with Sister. They are beginning to entertain the notion of making contacts with active lay groups in other parts of the world. They know now they can hope for very little leadership from the bishops and, as President William Caldwell declared in his opening remarks, have ceased to look to them for it.

Most significant, perhaps, they no longer measure their success in terms of a huge membership. Instead they are primarily concerned with the quality of the life they themselves lead in the world, the nature of their participation in the life of the church, the neighborhood, the city, the nation. Resolutions passed by Con IV were proof of this. If there are 12,000 dues-paying members —NAL's rounded figures—there must be many times that number of citizens who are impressed by NAL's active concern for open housing, the lives of migrant workers, reparations for blacks and Indians, higher public assistance, academic freedom in Catholic higher education, birth control, etc. On the international scene NAL declared itself in support of the efforts of "the really Christian church" in Latin America to assist in the freeing of people from economic oppression and political arrest, torture, persecution and death.

On a more parochial level, their fellow Catholics must by now be aware of the liberal wing's support of the National Association of Priests Councils' "moment of truth" March statement, which called for optional celibacy, full participation in selection of bishops, genuine exercise of leadership by American bishops in crucial areas of American life, as well as NAL's own expressed concern for the reform of seminaries, the renewal of education for priests already in service, and the reform of the ministerial concept in general.

A convention is more than its declarations, however. Con IV sounded three dominant notes: a profound interest in the third world, in peace now, in women. The first, board-meeting day was spent exploring the possibility of establishing contacts with other Catholic lay groups abroad and in the third world, to work with them for peace, justice, development. And while there were some who felt it presumptuous for a North American organization to think of international dimensions while its own house is still in such a state of disrepair, the board members thought this a new and desirable direction.

Peace occupied another day. Delegates listened to heroes of the Catholic Resistance talk about their *raisons-d'être*, and to local activists discuss their problems of organizations, publicity, police harassment, FBI surveillance, personal and familial resistance to war. Elizabeth McAlister was impressive and humble, as usual, placing her political action squarely into the wider context of gospel teaching, seeing for the Christian today three areas of responsibility which can no longer be evaded: to the word of God, to the world itself, in terms of service, and to one another. Act now, she told NAL, with the conviction that the act is right but perhaps, "never really to know."

Jim Forest (of the Milwaukee 14) in his eloquent, literate way, made many of the same points, and Bishop Antulio Parrilla-Bonnilla ("I am auxiliary to no one, bishop to everyone") fired at every possible target of episcopal, political, and economic oppression, addressed the members as "the *real* church in America, the *real* people of God," and called upon them to "liberate institutions," insist upon pluralism, democracy, and liberty of choice in their church.

One of the carry-over leaders of sessions from Con II was Mary Daly, whose message about women in the church has matured and deepened in two years. She outlined the sexist organizations which overtly or implicitly co-opt women, among them the Catholic church, uni-

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versities, law firms, the peace and radical movements. Only the movement for women's liberation itself, autonomous, self-contained with the sole interest of sisterhood, can effect real change. The movement will then form effective coalitions with other reform groups; this is the response to women who think they will work primarily in reform groups and then accomplish their own liberation.

It was not so much what Mary Daly said, though her remarks were provocative and intelligent, delivered in her usual cool and imperturbable manner, but the response to them at two jammed sessions which was the surprise of Con IV. Women, and a few men, asked for an overflow evening meeting. Here the whole pandora-box of female resentments against cultural and eccelesiastic institutions was opened. Mary Daly confessed to strong pessimism about the possibility of reform because of the whole symbolic, dogmatic, and liturgical structure of the church. Her questioners, more personal and pragmatic, wanted to know how to educate their daughters against acceptance of sexist attitudes, whether to participate in gradualism ("Handing out the Host is just what we always did: providing the meals. What's the big deal?"), and how to convince the men in their lives of the truths they now accept. Most impressive was the change these gatherings evinced in the outspokenness and self-awareness of "the new" Catholic woman. In other years at these conventions she had sat almost silent before the liberation gospel; now she is an open advocate of her own freedom, and ready to implement her new vision.

Encounters

As always, the most fascinating part of these conventions was the encounters in the lounges and in the cafeteria, the people one talked to in the dorms after hours and on the walks to the campus center. Consider: Bishop Bartholomew, traditionalist, of the Greek Orthodox church, in full beard and regalia, his pectoral cross gleaming across his chest, who warned everyone who would listen against the private demon each of us has dogging our every step; Al O'Connor, president of a huge Milwaukee laymen's group, at the convention to make up his mind about affiliating with the national organization ("Shouldn't we be doing our own thing, spending our money in the community? I don't really know"); two Chicago IHMs in handsome pants suits talking about new life-styles for their Order and for all Christians; Dan Gorham of Dallas, priest-founder of The Vineyard, an unofficial house in which priests and laity counsel alcoholics, homosexuals, prostitutes, male hustlers, dope addicts, talking to people interested in starting such a house; Fr. Larry Lucas, his famous grin suddenly become serious over his deeply held conviction of what should be the prime concern of the American Church: leadership by the hierarchy toward racial justice and equality. "I do not call it leadership if they do not influence behavior by *their* behavior."

And more: Msgr. Stephen Kelliher, visiting from his new pastorate in Scarsdale after his removal from the Archdiocesan canon law office, worrying aloud about any thinking which is pessimistic or looks to the past for evidences of church failure; Kevin Sullivan of Seminarians for Ministerial Renewal, disturbed about how far the established church is from understanding the alienation of the young from it; Joe Gomez, grape picker at ten who sent himself through college and now speaks for Cesar Chavez ("He has a dream about a National Union of the Poor"); and the Pentecostals who held a prayer meeting one night, well attended; Fr. Sal Umano, here to preach his personal Movement for a Better World, a free-floating group approved by the Holy See, which gives week-long reconciliation retreats for priests, sisters, and laity ("and sometimes bishops") so that they all will be able to understand and live with each other; Kirby Sheridan, of Catholics United for the Faith, explaining their doctrines: opposition to sex education, and the submission of men to the will of God; Mrs. Franklin Evers of the National Council of Catholic Women, who gave me a copy of *their* convention's resolutions (*for*: the UN, TV monitoring, prisoners of war freedom, Catholic Relief Services, peace, the family as educator, highway safety, and a campaign of prayer for the Holy Father, bishops, priests and religious, and prayer in space, among other things. *Against:* hunger, abortion, drug abuse, etc.); the priest members of organized groups, and the sister members of other organized groups, talking about their own ends and the chances of merger, at least uni-sexually.

And people everywhere, buying books by the Berrigans and posters on peace and freedom, and wearing Kidnap Kissinger? buttons, and supporting the most surprising resolution of all, urging the American bishops in the interests of pluralism in the church, to permit Latin masses, and the somewhat unsettling response to Mike Novak's talk, a call for new directions which turned out to be inner and downward and toward the liturgy as the fount of mystery and tragedy, not entertainment; and the last story I heard, from Mike Thistle of San Francisco, which dramatized the great distance between all these people and the officials of the church. It seems that a young priest proposed to the San Francisco Priests' Senate a resolution on Angela Davis. It was discussed, hotly debated, examined from every angle, whittled down, finally, to the proposition: "All persons are presumed innocent until proven guilty." The vote was then taken. Four priests voted against it.

The valleys, one may presume are green. Only some of the mountains remain frozen.

DORIS GRUMBACH

(Doris Grumbach, author and essayist, teaches English at the College of St. Rose in Albany, N.Y.)

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WOMEN'S-LIB THEOLOGY

IS GOD 'SHE'? AND SO WHAT?

God is the "Totally Other" without physical attributes. The human mind, however, thinks in anthropomorphic terms and thus we personify God together with the entire realm of that which is inaccessible to sensory perception.

Although God is "He" in the Hebrew Bible and in the religious literatures of Judaism and its daughters, Christianity and Islam, the symbol language of monotheism is certainly not patriarchal. On the contrary, it is weighted in favor of the feminine gender. Before "feminizing" God, woman's-lib theologians should reflect on the fact that the church is represented as "Mother" and that such all-important Christian symbols as Salvation and Charity are "feminine."

In the Hebrew biblical imagination, as in the allegories of virtually all cultures, the masculinity of God is compensated for by the feminine representations of the "core ideas." Thus the *Torah*, God's manifestation in revelation, is feminine, as is the *Shekhinah*—God's indwelling-and-presence in the world, which is especially close to Israel in Exile, comforting the people with a mother's loving tenderness. The peoplehood community of Israel (like "Mother Church") is feminine—*knesset yisrael*, and the Hebrew prophets referred to Israel as *mother, daughter and wife*, although the standard biblical designation is *b'nai yisrael*—the Sons of Israel.

The Sabbath, too, is feminine by grammatical gender and idealized as "bride" and "queen" in the liturgy and in Hebrew poetry. It is the day of brightness and splendor which compensates for the hardship of the workaday toil, and it is woman who is *commanded* to kindle the Sabbath lights, symbolizing the blessings of God's special gift to Israel.

The linguistic intuition which Noam Chomsky has traced in the universal laws of transformational and generative grammars is palpable also in the universality of the uniformity of the assignment of grammatical gender. Language has no "politics of sex," and it is free from discrimination against femininity. In Greek and Latin, as in all European languages which have borrowed their cultural vocabulary from the ancient Greeks and Romans, the arts of the Muses and all the disciplines of the humanities and sciences are feminine. In the Hebrew Bible, too, the great ideas and ideals are "feminine."

But the fact that *Alma Mater, Justitia* and Freedom, to cite only three instances, are cast in feminine representations, has had no impact on the exclusion of women from the universities that took pride in statues of *Alma Mater*, and on the anti-feminist discrimination of the legal profession symbolized by the blindfolded woman holding scales in perfect balance. And the Statue of Liberty as a woman has not molded U.S. governmental attitudes to women.

The *real* problem of the unfreedom of women in patriarchal societies is not religious language but the perennial impotence of the ideals expressed in language to direct action. The Apostle Paul was perhaps a bit too despairing of the potentiality of human freedom when he said, "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it," but he was accurate in describing not merely his own but the universal human dilemma when he continued: "For I do not the good I want, but the evil I do not want to do" (Romans 7:18 f.). The gap between word and deed—between intention and action—has been, and continues to be, the scandal of the human situation. It was *this* scandal that was "the fire burning in the bones" not merely of Jeremiah (20:9) but of all the biblical prophets and of all their successors who demanded that their societies "pursue justice."

The women's-lib theologians are overly optimistic, really simplistic, in hoping that "feminizing" God will do away with the repression of women in the church and in Western society. They should know that the "feminization" of virtually all Greek cultural symbols had no effect at all on the nasty utterances on woman as "a curse," as a "creature without mind" and as "a necessary evil" (for bearing children), which abound in the writings of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes and the Greek philosophers as well. Notwithstanding Samuel Johnson's opinion that while all wise men have the same opinion of women they do not divulge it, most wise men—not excepting Dr. Johnson—have derogated woman-in-the-flesh while spinning "feminine" imageries. The Greek and Roman pantheons were about equally apportioned to goddesses, but the worship of the female deities did not sway the males who knelt before them to identify the women of Olympus with their earthly counterparts. I don't think one is overly pessimistic in prognosticating that referring to God as "She" and substituting "Eve" for "Adam" in the creation story will not *really* liberate women.

TRUDE WEISS-ROSMARIN

(Dr. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin is editor of The Jewish Spectator.*)*

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THE RETURN OF POLITICAL POETRY

'New mental moves had to be made'

TODD GITLIN

One of the happy by-products of the '60s is the renaissance of political poetry. This is a matter of more than literary moment; it says something about the nature of the inner life among at least the educated middle classes. The shell of privateness is broken, though privacy is still at a premium. But the world intrudes, and the intellect and craft of poetry have wheeled to face it. At least this is realism. It remains to be seen what else it is.

As always, poetry has followed, not led. Some of the Beats, notably Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti, did howl away at the night of the late '50s, and some people listened, and wondered, and a few even took off on the road, but nothing much happened, either to the rest of American poetry or to the lives of the listeners. John Beecher, Thomas McGrath, Paul Goodman and a few others wrote poetry on political subjects, but they were placed low in the poetic pecking order. Poets in general —poets as a profession—did not begin to reckon with the world again until the stillness of the '50s was broken—first by the civil rights movement, then by the anti-war movement and most notably by the resistance of the Vietnamese. Action, intentional political life, was becoming possible again, in all its ambiguity and richness, and this could not help but affect the way someone with a minimal awareness would write poetry. (It helped, too, that translations of Brecht and Neruda became widely available: models and intimations.) The fabric of what is taken for granted, on which had rested the sweet obliviousness of American poetry in the '40s and '50s, was shattered. New mental moves had to be made to make sense of what was going on in the streets, the jungles, on the TV sets and on the bombing runs.

Robert Bly has been one of the leaders of the new political sensibility, if it is possible to speak of leaders at all. Around 1966 he co-founded American Writers Against the Vietnam War, which gathered poets to read, mostly on campuses, poems about the war. (That is to say, poems against the war. I don't think I've ever seen a poem defending the war.) I attended one of these readings, and I remember feeling a kind of exultation: pieces of social life which I valued, political struggle and poetic sensibility, were coming together; this was as it should be. Bly himself was robust, full of energy, not then my image of what a Poet was like; maybe he always came on that way, or maybe he too was intoxicated by a sense of the pieces of the puzzle falling together. Now he has edited *Forty Poems Touching On Recent American History* (Beacon, $5.95), an anthology which provides some models of great political poetry, arrangements of word and sound to live your life toward, to bolster the spirit and even—even this!—instruct the mind. Bly's introduction is also helpful, if not in the way he intended, in indicating the limits of the new renaissance.

First place belongs of course to Whitman:
Why reclining, interrogating? why myself and all drowsing?
What deepening twilight—scum floating atop of the waters,
Who are they as bats and night-dogs askant in the capitol?
What a filthy Presidentiad! (O South, your torrid suns! O North, your arctic freezings!)
Are those really Congressmen; are those the great

TODD GITLIN, *whose latest book* Campfires of the Resistance *will be published shortly by Bobbs-Merrill, teaches at the New College of San Jose State College.*

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Judges? is that the President?
Then I will sleep awhile yet, for I see that these States sleep, for reasons;
(With gathering murk, with muttering thunder and lambent shoots we all duly awake,
South, North, East, West, inland and seaboard, we will surely awake).

From the turn of the century are William Vaughan Moody's eloquent denunciation of the Spanish-American War and Ruben Dario's thundering-whispering "To Theodore Roosevelt." Neruda is here, and Jeffers (God, it is good to see Jeffers in an anthology), and Ginsberg and McGrath and some of the leading members of the coming poetic establishment—Ignatow, Stafford, Creeley, Snyder, Wright. A higher proportion of the poems are memorable than in any other anthology I can think of. If the myth still stands in some quarters that the poem on a political subject must be shrill and one-dimensional, it is exploded here.

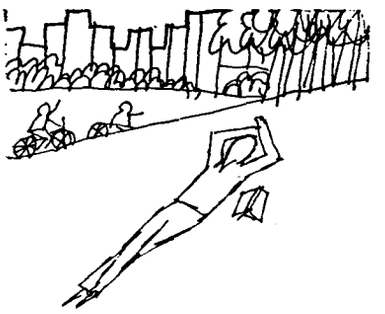
But Bly's introduction settles none of the deeper questions of what poetry should be in a time of political upheaval. "What is needed to write good poems about the outward world," he writes, "is inwardness." He condemns the culture's polarization of inward and political concerns, yet he succumbs to the same alienation: "The life of the nation can be imagined also not as something deep inside our psyche, but as a psyche larger than the psyche of anyone living, a larger sphere, floating above everyone. In order for the poet to write a true political poem, he has to be able to have such a grasp of his own concerns that he can leave them for a while, and then leap up into this other psyche. He wanders about there a while, and as he returns he brings back plant-seeds that have stuck to his clothes, some inhabitants of this curious sphere, which he then tries to keep alive with his own psychic body."

False Division

This division of spheres is false, resting as it does on a mystification which pervades American intellectual life. Now Bly is right in wanting the energy and imagination of political poems to come from the inner regions, but he is wrong in thinking that the inner regions are outside politics. The poet's inner life, like anyone else's, is battered and bounded by the public—political—world. The poet like anyone else is more acted upon than acting, from infancy on up. If the poet does not acknowledge this, he is oblivious; he is still clutching the myth of the lone hero.

Bly confuses the poet's privacy, which is necessary, with social isolation, which is a fantasy. One can have a private study and yet still be connected to others as victim, executioner, accomplice, producer, consumer, teacher, etc. The inner life into which the poet plunges is a socially conditioned life, experienced personally but not of merely personal use. (Otherwise, no one else would read the poem except other poets studying technique. Personal and professionalized as American poetry is, it still has its readers and listeners.) The poet becomes fully political when he accepts the political nature of his own life and expresses it in piercing language. The sad fact is that it took the Vietnam war to teach the poets that the political world lives inside their private bubbles; so alienated is the contemporary poet as a social type. The shallowness of the American poetic consciousness is revealed in the fact that the poet thinks the public sphere is only for visiting. Like it or not, he has to live there. In his mystification the poet is of course no more or less abstracted than his social class; but one expects more of a poet.

The great poets represented in Bly's anthology had no illusions on this score. Whitman's barbaric "I" was the



personification of an American era as well as a creator spirit evoking a world. Was he an "inward" or an "outward" poet? Diving inward, the poet discovers the world; looking outward, he discovers himself. At the point of mastery, there is no difference.

This is not to say that a political poem requires nothing more than political opinions or even feelings. We are all too familiar with the "poem" which serves as a kind of loudspeaker for an emotion or position working outside the poem, never revealing itself in the fresh language which must be the currency of any poetry. But neither is it true that strong, even inflexible opinions are contrary to the spirit of poetry. Neruda, an active Communist for most of his adult life, is a case in point.

"The political activists in the literary world are wrong," writes Bly. "They try to force political poetry out of poets by pushing them more deeply into events, making them feel guilt if they don't abandon privacy. But the truth is that the political poem comes out of the deepest privacy." Bly has set up a straw man. The active political life permits privacy if the poet insists on it. Assuredly Neruda has not lacked for privacy; he did not write "The United Fruit Co." at a meeting. A great poem which is also superb propaganda—this seems paradoxical only for poets and literary critics who have bought the prevailing depoliticization of the intellect.

A political idea is a way of making sense of the world,

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a way of healing the world and making it one, and if it is a good political idea it arises from sensitivity to one's experience. Therefore it is perfectly suited for the poetic form, in which language becomes a chisel against the dead stone of ignorance and evil, and one's experience —in the broadest sense—becomes available as a truth for others. Poetry is for the intellect too. Ideally it helps heal the dismal breach between head and heart.

Despite his theory, Bly himself is one of the finest anti-war poets of these years, and in his *The Teeth-Mother Naked At Last* (City Lights, $1) he has reached a stage far in advance of most of the anti-war poets. Again, I suggest this is because they are still basically *anti-war* poets for whom politics is a separate sphere that happens, this time, to have intruded on their private space. The war for them is a singular abomination to be dispelled, not a natural consequence of ordinary American political structure and life. As a result they are stalled in moral indignation toward a war part of whose ugliness lies in its incomprehensibility.

Bly's poem is the first I've seen from an established American poet which traces the war back to the home front; which makes, in other words, a political analysis. But since he has risked ideas, it is proper to criticize his ideas. And here I submit, in all admiration of the force of Bly's poetic movement, that he is confused.

> The ministers lie, the professors lie, the television lies, the priests lie. . . .
> These lies mean that the country wants to die.
> Lie after lie starts out into the prairie grass,
> like enormous trains of Conestoga wagons. . . .

A brilliant image, perforce connecting the war to the Manifest Destiny that rehearsed it. But it is followed with a passage about the American death-wish which I find considerably less illuminating. Why should Americans have any more a death-wish than anyone else? Or Richard Nixon any more than Jerry Rubin? A black enlisted man more than a college professor? This is reversion to a vulgar Freudianism, a shallow idea that makes for shallow poetry. Fortunately there are much more intriguing ideas in later passages:

> It's because a hospital room in the average American city now costs $60 a day that we bombed hospitals in the North
> It's because the aluminum window-shade business is doing so well in the United States that we roll fire over entire villages
> It's because the milk trains coming into New Jersey hit the right switches every day that the best Vietnamese men are cut in two by American bullets that follow each other like freight cars. . . .
> It's because we have new packaging for smoked oysters that bomb holes appear in the rice paddies. . . .
> The Marines use cigarette lighters to light the thatched roofs of huts
> because so many Americans own their own homes. . . .
> They are dying because the President has opened a Bible again.
> They are dying because gold deposits have been found among the Shoshoni Indians.

I suppose this is not the place for a full-blown political discourse; a volume could be written on these lines, and probably should be. They bypass the left-wing orthodoxy which sees the war as simply a ruling-class plot, as if the ruling class did not have the support of a large portion of the population. But the left-wing orthodoxy is an important partial truth: support for the war is not the same as initiating it, needing it, using it as the keystone of one's worldview. (The Weathermen have made the same mistake.)

The "$60 a day" line is so subtle as to border on obscurity: does Bly mean that the exploitation of the American population is related to the massacre of Vietnamese? This is true, but contradicts his citation of suburban greed as a cause for the war ("because so many Americans own their own homes")—unless he means something else by this latter line. This is the subtlety of the only slightly distorted fun-house mirror: it's hard to tell whether there's distortion or not. Does he mean that the need-manufacturing industry ("smoked oysters") also manufactures a need to bomb Vietnam? True, but it needs to be said more clearly, and it is a different point from the success of the window-shade business, which might be construed (or so window-shade executives would argue) as a response to autonomous consumer demand. Bly needs to be clearer about the function of consumerism in advanced capitalism, capitalism's need for overseas expansion and therefore imperial war, the relation between technology and the corporate state, etc. But at least he is probing for domestic causes, refusing to pass off the war as something epiphenomenal, and he is in the right neighborhood of ideas.

An "Inward Poet"

Denise Levertov is one of the "inward poets" whom Bly cites as proof that the master of the private self is best equipped to plunge upward to political realms. Certainly she has been most private in her concerns, trying to find a private space in a public world and to make public business of a private life—not quite a successful synthesis. I believe, she wrote in 1959, "that a violent imitation of the horrors of our times is the concern of poetry. . . . I long for poems of an inner harmony in utter contrast to the chaos in which they exist. Insofar as poetry has a social function it is to awaken sleepers by other means than shock." It almost seems that she had been avoiding political subjects for fear of what it would do to her poetry. If that was the case, she

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needn't have worried. Her new book, *Relearning the Alphabet* (New Directions, $4.75) contains some of the most beautifully made political poetry around.

It is not poetry that confronts with hard ideas, like Bly's, but it is powerful in another way; it takes us to the place where the inner person meets the outer reality, can no longer shake off Vietnam, Biafra, black rebellions, and must ask what to do. In the early part of the book she emerges as poet of impotence, feeling privacy wither as the best people burn and the best intentions wither on the vine. It is not so much poetry about politics as poetry about the political sensibility; political activists will recognize her moods, showing her ability to universalize experience, at least middle-class experience, in the guise of privacy.

What do I know?
Swing of the
birch catkins,
drift of
watergrass,
tufts of
green on the
trees,
(flowers, not leaves
bearing intricately
little winged seeds
to fly in fall)
and whoever
I meet now,
on the path.
It's not enough.

She shocks because she is shocked, with a voice to be respected if for no other reason than her previous insistence that she would not allow herself to be shocked. In 1966 she is afraid she cannot "see except dulled and unfocused/the delicate, firm, whole flesh of the still unburned." Her "innocence" now seems "arrogant." She is still writing private poems, as sure of line and tone as ever, but they are not the book's center of gravity, except perhaps for the lovely title poem. For me the crowning moment comes at the end of her long "From a Notebook: October '68-May '69." The poem begins with "Revolution or death./. . . Of course I choose/revolution"; it winds through her more familiar territory: "Without a terrain in which, to which, I belong,/language itself is my one home, my Jerusalem"; she worries whether she can become whole, revolution and language together; she experiences the battle for People's Park in Berkely; and perhaps because of this or perhaps because she is simply a marvelous poet, she is able to end with the most exact evocation of revolution I have ever read:

Revolution: a crown of tree
raises itself out of the heavy
flood.
A branch lifts
under null skies' weight
pushes against
walls of air, flashing
clefts in it.
The floodwaters
stir, mud
swirls to the surface.
A hand, arm,
lifts in the crawl—
hands, arms, intricate
upflashing—
a sea full of swimmers!
their faces' quick steady
lift for air—
Maybe what seems
evanescent is solid.
Islands
step out of the waves on rock feet.

This is sheer Eisenstein on paper. Images of revolution tend to be stale and static, or episodic; they rarely match the richness of the process. (Compare Mao's bare "A single spark can start a prairie fire.") What works in Levertov's image is the intricate flux of tree, swimmers, and islands, the effort and the resistance, the animate and the inanimate, the process (swimming) and the provision of places to rest and live (islands), and the inanimate islands in the process of becoming too as history surprisingly upheaves. . . . It is simply beautiful. That Levertov has become a political activist doesn't seem to have damaged her gift of rhythm or her skill of fusing form and content, image and motion. My hunch is that the complete poet goes inward and outward at once, and finds the two meeting in a tension which, fully apprehended, makes a new creative energy.

Other Poets

Robert Bly asks why "so few American poems [have] penetrated to any reality in our political life," and yet despite the reasons he gives there is a large fact which he misses: there are not quite so few. I am not thinking simply of the large anti-war anthologies (Bly's own and Walter Lowenfels' *Where is Vietnam?*), or Lowenfels' *The Writing On The Wall* and *Poems from Our Third World*. One trouble with these anthologies is that the poets play jack-in-the-box, popping up with a single poem and then disappearing; there is no density. But also many or most of the poets represented there have been essentially private poets bursting briefly into political statement only to return to private affairs. For these poets, the more established ones, politics is something intermittent, an intrusion, like Sunday at church. Some like Levertov try to assimilate politics into their life and art, but the others return to their private spheres as quickly as possible. Their lives permit them this luxury, a luxury which is, as I have said, based on a mystifica-

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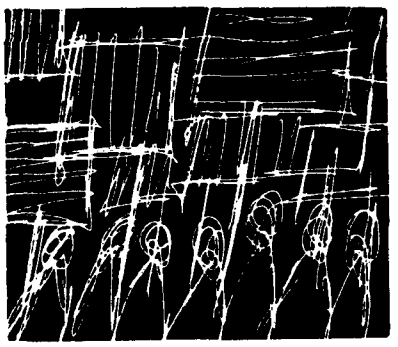
tion concerning the independence of the private life.

There are, however, other poets, mostly young, mostly not well known, and mostly not thinking of themselves as poets, who have been living consciously political lives during the past decade and who have somehow found the time at covert typewriters to write fine political poetry. I had the privilege last year of reading great quantities of their work in the course of compiling an



anthology, *Campfires of the Resistance: Poetry from the Movement,* which Bobbs-Merrill is about to publish. After soliciting poems in a few underground papers and radical magazines, I was deluged. Most of what I read was just flat and bad, but I ended up with some sixty good poets. When I started, I hadn't thought I would find twenty.

Writing about primitive ritual poetry, the Marxist critic Christopher Caudwell wrote that "one man, alone, singing a song, still feels his emotion stirred by collective images. He is already exhibiting that paradox of art—man withdrawing from his fellows into the world of art, only to enter more closely into communion with humanity." The first poem, he says, is the invocation to the harvest, but you don't have to follow his rather orthodox dialectical materialism to see that as civilization developed, the We of the ritual yielded to the I of the individualist poet. What I discovered compiling *Campfires* was that the We has returned. (The same seems to have happened to black poetry, which is in full flower.) It is not the formal We of mainstream poetry, meaning the coffee-table community of educated readers, but the more animated and explicit We of a movement in the process of gathering. I had had a hunch that the movement's poetry would present its history—the moods, the events, the dilemmas, the texture of experience—more honestly and richly than its official prose, and I think my hunch was borne out. Radicals like other poets confide in poetry; perhaps because it is closer to the natural rhythms of emotion, it is the ideal medium for exploring that border country where personal and political concerns meet and sometimes synthesize.

I do not mean to say that these poets are not individuated. The We of the movement has been ample and diverse, not just because opinions vary but because sensibility does and experience does. The irony of Dick Lourie, the hard-bitten agony of Christopher Z. Hobson, the open lyricism of Michael Rossman, the blunt imagery of Marge Piercy, Jane Stembridge's and Charlie Cobb's elegies for what was found and lost in the civil rights movement, Sol Yurick's savage satire, Martin Glass' ruthless self-exposure, Kenneth Pitchford's apocalyptic dramas—they have all been present in the radical life. The poems I looked for were not so much those that expressed opinions as those that expressed what it has felt like to be trying to ram, push and coax America toward humanity. It has felt like all those things, and more. Levertov and others have been insisting that form and content must fit each other, and so the *Campfires* poems range from naturalism to Brechtian didacticism to surrealism to the unnamable. But the fact that in the '60s most of these poets felt themselves to be immersed in a common enterprise lends their work a special weight. The whole, I think, is more than the sum of its parts, though the parts themselves are considerable.

What emerges is something infinitely more important than a Party Line: a history from the inside, a decade-book, an X-ray of a generation, or maybe something more like a demonstration where ostensibly thousands of people are "saying" the same thing yet thousands of things are going on at once: order out of chaos out of order. . . . Whether that We can hold up in the '70s and beyond depends, I think, on the vitality of our collective political life. Despite the hardening and disintegration on the left, it is unlikely that we are heading for anything like the political disillusionment of the 1793 Terror, which drove Wordsworth to surrender and Blake into epic and visionary isolation; or of the counter-revolutionary Russian '20s, which drove Mayakovsky to suicide; or of the Hitler-Stalin Pact and its aftermath, which sent Auden and Spender on their separate (and I think inferior) ways. Regardless of the fate of the organized left, the political crisis in this country will deepen, leaving poets the choice of ignoring it or digging deeper to its sources. Some, no doubt, will choose the path of least resistance, exhausting their political wills in catalogues of evil and impotence until finally nothing seems faintly alive but the withered private self. But I doubt the politicization of American poetry is a mere fad.

If that is the case, I want to take the risk of suggesting some directions in which political poetry ought to move: not in the spirit of ultimatum, but with appreciation for the difficulty of doing any of these things well. (If this seems a clumsy and arrogant thing to propose, perhaps it is only because poets have not had much to say to each other as a community about anything but form and a few political data: each necessary but neither sufficient.) First the thrust outward, as Bly seems to be moving, toward a fuller understanding of political reality as a seamless system. There must also be a thrust inward, toward a grasp of the political determinants and limits of our private worlds. Without this public probing, which

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activists need as much as poets, politics will remain—as it is for most middle-class male activists—something external and intermittent.

Finally—dare one call for it, as if it could be summoned at will?—we need a flood of imagination and specifically of affirmative vision. In the past poets have been notorious utopians, but our political renaissance has produced precious little prophetic vision, poetic or otherwise. To paraphrase Brecht's Galileo, unhappy is the society that has need of utopians, but so we have. If the Nixon regime makes a poor climate for cleansing vision, so much greater is the need to transcend immediate circumstance—a prime faculty of the mental life—and to hold up images of what society we want to live for. Hardly anyone is doing it except in sketch and fragment. I am not saying that poets need be didactic, though that is not always a bad idea. But in a time of easy despair it is the responsibility of sensitive people to "cleanse the doors of perception" as they open on politics just as they open on objects. I am not much troubled about the political responsibility of poets because I think that in most matters they have the same responsibility as anyone else. But in the statement of a vision the poets have a special calling if, as poets, they are to be more than a footnote in the history of our time.

Until recently poetry had lost its audience, and by and large was not missed. The immediacy of other media was of course a major factor—music became the major vessel of creative fantasy, and no doubt will remain so—but poetry's collapse on itself had a great deal to do with its irrelevance. Now the country is thick with people whose vocation is to experience the world whole, and themselves in it. If it can weld self to reality, head to heart, idea to rhythm, vision to insight, poetry now has an audience to win, and nothing to lose but its chains.

THE REBEL REPUBLICAN

McCloskey in motion

ROBERT KUTTNER

With the announcement that Senator Robert Taft, Jr. will be the Administration's stand-in candidate in the Ohio Republican primary nearly twelve months from now, comes the first public indication that the White House is taking the "dump Nixon" movement seriously. The choice of Taft was especially appropriate. In his statement of candidacy, Taft angrily denounced former Senator Goodell for having taken the name of Taft's late father in vain. In a *Times* op-ed piece discussing the "Republican Insurgency," Goodell had quoted a grassroots Republican to the effect that "Robert Taft, Sr. would never have allowed American men to continue fighting in a war 10,000 miles from home." Probably true; but understandably offensive to Taft, Jr. in the context of a campaign to dump an incumbent Republican president. If ever there was a Republican more loyal to party regularity than Richard Nixon, it was the elder Taft.

Goodell staunchly denies that his view of the Republican insurgency necessarily entails dumping Nixon. Rather, he says, the insurgents see the country and the party in trouble as a result of the continuation of the war, and they wish to demonstrate the political as well as moral wisdom of more rapid withdrawal. If it turns out that the Administration does not budge, then the more drastic expedient of a primary fight may be necessary. Goodell, of course, has little to lose. Nixon and Mitchell have already done their worst to him. The two other open insurgents, Representatives McCloskey and Riegle, are something else. Both face loss of their own seats in primary fights as a result of their public disloyalty to the Administration, and gradually, one has to conclude that they must be in earnest, or be damn fools. This seems to be the emerging White House view.

A few days before the May 16th closed meeting of nineteen anti-Administration Republicans, Senate colleagues did double-takes when Goodell, the meeting's organizer, sat down for lunch in the Senate dining room with John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky. Senator Cooper, a long time friend of Goodell, is not fond of the war, but he is hardly the type to join an open rebellion against Nixon. Nonetheless, the lunch gave Nixon loyalists brief heartburn.

Goodell took the precaution of changing the meeting's announced location at the last minute, and remarkably in this leaky town, neither the press nor the White House has been able to learn who attended. With a follow-up meeting planned, there remains a good deal of curiosity. According to Goodell, the White House went so far as to pump his law partner for details.

McCloskey and Riegle take a rather different view

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than Goodell, although they are willing to attend his meetings. The two Congressmen see a primary fight not as the ultimate clout, but as really the *only* clout. In the last few days, their public statements have sounded less like Goodell's "this is not a dump Nixon movement" and more like an active candidacy. On ABC's Issues and Answers May 30, McCloskey virtually declared that he would enter at least two primaries—Alaska and New Hampshire, and probably more.

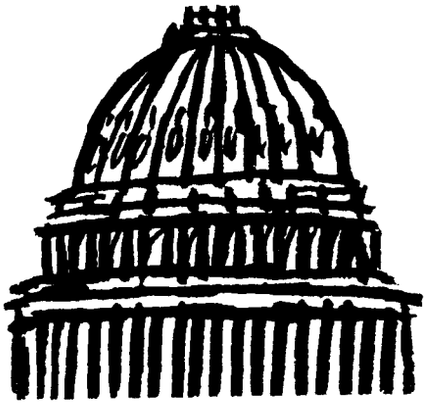
Goodell, on the other hand, is thinking more in terms of an organization of insurgent, peace Republicans, with state by state or even district-level committees, a newsletter, and a drive to demonstrate that many local Republicans consider the Nixon war policy disastrous for Republican prospects at all levels in 1972. The organization is expected to materialize out of the June meeting. Goodell would prefer a better known candidate if a primary challenge is to be made. He sees McCloskey as playing essentially a "sacrificial" role—an insurgent candidate who can not possibly win, but who might amass enough primary votes to embarrass the Administration and to push it toward faster withdrawal. And what if the result is indeed to speed withdrawal and thereby make Nixon a more attractive candidate in November? To this, Goodell, McCloskey and Riegle answer in chorus: the point is to save lives, and just because Nixon may be enhanced doesn't mean we shouldn't do it. . . .

Both Goodell and McCloskey mention several alternate insurgent candidates: Hatfield, John Gardener (he is a Republican, remember?), and others who have no intention of stepping forward. The consensus on that other prominent anti-war Republican, John V. Lindsay, who remains a prophet not without honor save in his own city, is that he would be insane to run as a Republican. No one who McCloskey might defer to shows any serious interest.

So McCloskey is beginning to move. His paid campaign staff is approaching twenty, almost the size of McGovern's. He has raised the possibility of impeachment proceedings, citing President Nixon's expansion of the war into Laos the very week its sole legislative sanction, the Tonkin Gulf resolution, was repealed. He has accused the Administration of deliberately lying to him during his trip to Vietnam about policy on the bombing of Laotian villages. And, of course, most recently he seized headlines as a recipient of sections of the Pentagon Papers from Daniel Ellsberg. It was McCloskey who first threatened the strategy for getting the Papers in the record which was eventually pursued by Senator Mike Gravel of Alaska—reading them in the House or in Committee.

However, McCloskey's earlier, well-documented testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the deliberate obliteration of Northern Laos and the details of Operation Phoenix, which patently violates Article Three of the 1949 Geneva Convention, was virtually blacked out in the press. In their coverage of that day's Fulbright hearing, both the *Times* and the *Washington Post,* seizing on the presence of an honest to goodness hawk, gave most of their space to the predictable testimony of Vets of Foreign Wars National Commander Rainwater.

McCloskey looked more like the soldier. He was a Marine second lieutenant in Korea, and is quite popular in his conservative San Mateo county district—except among Republican regulars. Only five months after upsetting Shirley Temple Black in a special 1968 election to fill a vacancy, he was nearly beaten in the Republican primary by Robert Barry, a carpetbagger ex-congressman from Westchester. His margin in the 1970 primary was about 60-40, but he swamped his Democratic opponent in November. At least two candidates want to challenge McCloskey in next year's primary. The two major Re-



publican volunteer groups in California have already censured him, and so has the Sacramento county Republican committee. The Administration appears to be avoiding a direct attack on McCloskey in his own district, leaving that to Governor Reagan and some loyalist California congressmen.

McCloskey says that his chances of actually upsetting Nixon are less than one in a thousand. The Republican party did not mandate democratization of delegate selection procedures last convention, and in effect the majority of the delegates have already been selected from among the cadres of regulars. Still, says a McCloskey staff assistant, "we're going to do it like we're in it. You have to in order to be credible." "The pros," he adds, "are going to be looking at whether we are staffing an office, raising money, doing all the things that show you're serious."

Congressman Don Riegle, McCloskey's biggest booster, adds that even if the object is to change the war policy, not to seriously expect to oust Nixon, the game "has to be candidacy-centered." Riegle comes from a Michigan district very much like McCloskey's. Recently, the local Republican committee entertained a motion to censure him and deny him party funds, which almost carried by a vote of 17-21. Riegle gives you the feeling that he idolizes McCloskey, and genuinely wants to see

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him be President. The other day in Riegle's office, a middle-aged couple from his district dropped in to say hello. They had been to visit McCloskey, who had seen their wounded son in the Long Binh hospital. "He's a great guy," Riegle said. "He should be in the White House instead of the guy they've got there now." Then Riegle went back into his office to conclude a meeting with McCloskey's assistant and Al Lowenstein. They were meeting to discuss scheduling of future anti-war rallies. McCloskey and Riegle plan to continue their appearances on platforms with their old Democratic allies, but are somewhat concerned that this will tarnish their credibility as Republican insurgents among other Republicans.

Riegle says that it is premature to ask other elected Republicans or party functionaries for their open support yet. A McCloskey assistant adds: "we can't ask them to put their careers on the line." But in effect, McCloskey and Riegle have done just that. The gamble is that the effort will help turn the tide against the war, and that they will be vindicated in time to avoid primary defeats in their own districts. Goodell reminds you that at a comparable time four years ago—June of 1967—no Democratic officeholder had come out against Johnson, and Al Lowenstein was still several weeks away from proposing the celebrated dump. But any Republican insurgency, should it get off the ground, will be very different from 1968 when Kennedy or McCarthy won the support of numerous elected officials and party officers. The Republican party is the party of regulars, and the consummate regular is Richard Nixon. If McCloskey or another insurgent does make an impact, it will be even more McCarthyesque than McCarthy. At best, it might increase Nixon's vulnerability in 1972, just as the Kennedy and McCarthy campaigns did to Johnson and then Humphrey in 1968.

Still, the McCloskey people like to dream. "We tell people," said one, "register Republican; work for Pete. You can have the reverse of '68—peace candidates in both parties."

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OF MITES AND MONSTERS

THE SCREEN

Although they're billed as documentaries about nature, *The Hellstrom Chronicle* and *Blue Water, White Death* are films largely about people. Since this is typical of documentaries about nature, it's no mark against these particular films. Some films of this sort are ruined by the egocentricity of man, others aren't. *The Hellstrom Chronicle*, for instance, is. Its superb footage of insects is wasted because of the human banality that accompanies it. In *Blue Water, White Death,* however, underwater explorers show themselves to be a breed almost as rare as the Great White Shark they study.

Entomologically *The Hellstrom Chronicle* is a Mondo Buggo. After a plague of locusts, a mound of termites and a column of driver ants, we begin to realize that what we're seeing isn't exactly a normative view of the insect world. After the courtship rites of some spiders we realize that what we're seeing isn't necessarily an insect at all, despite the film's earlier assurance that it would be. Producer-director Walton Green seems to favor weirdness over other criteria for inclusion that would be more scientific.

The most improbable creature unearthed by the film is Dr. Nils Hellstrom (Lawrence Pressman), a fictitious Ph.D. obsessed with the idea that man and insect will end up competing for the earth's diminished resources. Hellstrom's chronicle consists of wisdom like, "In a cooperative society the fate of one is the destiny of all," which is an observation on bees. Aside from the fact that it's meaningless (think about it), such a remark makes *The Hellstrom Chronicle* seem the dark side of a Walt-Disney moon. A Disney film always leaves the impression that animals are cute and cuddly children. *The Hellstrom Chronicle* gives the opposite, but equally ridiculous impression that insects are totalitarian brutes.

The one story completely obliterated from the film is how Helmut Barth and his fellow cinematographers ob-

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tained the film's microphotography of insects. A reason for this omission has to be the fact that this story would have shown up Hellstrom's commentary for the hokum it is. Although Hellstrom would like to terrify us with being carried off by the ants, to get the very footage we're watching Barth repeatedly allowed the ants to swarm all over him. Apparently he could just dust himself off and continue filming. Like the insects it depicts, *The Hellstrom Chronicle* could have profited from wearing its skeleton on the outside. Though less cataclysmic than Hellstrom's fantasies, Barth's adventures would at least have had the advantage of being true—a quality that documentaries ought to strive for occasionally.

Blue Water, White Death retains this skeleton that *The Hellstrom Chronicle* has discarded. The film is put together as a documentary about how to make a documentary about sharks. Writer-producer Peter Gimbel was interested in the Great White Shark because it is one of the rarest and most savage predators in the world. After we've seen all the other open-ocean sharks feeding on a whale carcass, it's impossible to imagine how the Great White could distinguish itself. But it does.

Gimbel and Co. photograph all the sharks from submersible, aluminum cages because the sharks won't bite metal if they can help it. The remarkable thing about the sharks is the lack of ceremony and circumspection in their behavior. But the lone exception to this is their habit of bumping their prey before attacking, as if testing to see what it is. And when they bump Gimbel's cages, the sharks swim away again. All sharks except the Great White, that is. This one vestige of ritual caution—this bumping—is unknown to the Great White, which attacks even the aluminum cages ferociously and without hesitation or provocation.

Of course much of the film's drama occurs on the surface as Gimbel's boat hunts this particular shark and he frets that one might not be sighted. For this human element of the film there was, as in *The Hellstrom Chronicle,* a separate director, James Lipscomb. Generally the impression that Lipscomb's footage would give us is that, though friendlier and warmer-blooded, Gimbel is as fearless and guileless as the shark itself. There's no question about the fearlessness of either Gimbel or his fellow divers, Stan Waterman and Ron and Valerie Taylor. But as a department-store-heir-Wall-Street-broker-turned-explorer, Gimbel is incapable of being guileless.

Gimbel's inevitable self-consciousness about his image shows up in little touches—like the fact his crew includes a folk singer whose function, presumably, is that of a court troubador. This is a bit much, and sometimes we have the feeling Gimbel's mugging for the camera, or Waterman's, isn't so spontaneous and unpremeditated as it's supposed to be. The mugging seems most suspicious when the two men are trying to be as deadpan as possible. At one point Gimbel suggests to Waterman that they leave the cages and swim among the sharks—"to get better pictures." Waterman doesn't even have to bump that idea before he swallows it whole. Thereafter the pictures are more spectacular—but not the pictures of the sharks. It's the pictures Gimbel and Waterman take of each other, out there swimming among the sharks, that now fill the center-screen.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

Summer Schedule

In keeping with the usual practice, *Commonweal* is again appearing on alternate weeks during the summer months. Forthcoming issues will be dated August 6, August 20, September 3 and September 17. From then on we will resume our normal weekly publishing schedule.

JEAN GARRIGUE

THE GIRALDA

(A colossal statue symbolizing Faith
that is so adjusted as to turn
easily in the wind. It surmounts
the square tower, formerly a
minaret, of the cathedral of Seville)

This was all my light that while,
I burned for it in a spiral
And was burned out. Then lit again
And even when burnt out, smoldering.
Think of the girasol, I spun
As even the giralda around my sun.

Faith regards its dominions of rooftiles
(O my fire burnt low)
Faith this weathervane surveying her legends
The buckled roof spanning the vaultings
The turrets of gargoyles.

Faith this dervish turned by the winds
This way and that but fixed to its spire
(O my fire, my faith turns slow)
Though handed by winds every which way.

To the north the mountains to the east the tombs
To the south the thickets of the thorn
To the west the moon that stands straight up
From the leaves of the tree of childhood.

Has the wind forgotten my weathervane
That moaned when it creaked and blew?
O my fire, it does not turn.
Something has gone down.

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STRAVINSKY'S SACRED MUSIC

Religious fervor malgré lui

RALPH THIBODEAU

Igor Stravinsky once remarked, in his *Dialogues,* "One hopes to worship God with a little art if one has any."

At the end of a long and productive life, besides the abstract approach to Deity which all music can evoke, Stravinsky could claim some dozen major works set to sacred texts in a total production of slightly more than 100 compositions—a rather impressive number of sacred works from a man identified primarily with the theater.

From these works, and from statements by himself and by his friends, we must try to deduce something about the true religious orientation of the composer, and about the sacred character of his religious works, which have often been called into question. We are on somewhat unfirm ground in attempting answers which perhaps only God can give, but we must refer to human canons of judgment, because they are all we have.

There can be no doubt about the fundamental religious faith of the man. We have heard it from his friends and in some of his writings and recorded conversations. From 1926 on, he devoutly believed in and practiced the Orthodox religion, and in his later years he became very close to the Roman church. But as a composer he was careful not to inject his religious faith into his music, whether sacred or secular. One of his biographers, Alexander Tansman, paraphrases Stravinsky in the following, with a direct quotation at the end:

> Faith is based on a dogmatic order, allowing neither for discussion nor for criticism, but demanding, rather, a total submission; whereas a work of art presupposes freedom of judgment, the possibility of accepting or rejecting . . . in short, it is subject to every manifestation of human weakness and . . . consequently submitted to the critical faculty. This very fact definitely precludes for Stravinsky every possibility of a synthesis of these two elements—"to confuse these two orders is to show an absolute lack of discernment and unmistakably bad taste."

Elsewhere Stravinsky has said, "I consider music to be, in its very essence, incapable of expressing anything whatever, be it a feeling, a psychological state, a natural phenomenon, etc."

It is this intense intellectualism, essentially a hyperclassical attitude toward music, and Stravinsky's adoption in his later years of the mathematical serial technique of Schoenberg and Webern that have caused some misunderstanding, or at least lack of appreciation, of his sacred music. The attitude and the technique, combined with Stravinsky's overwhelming egotism, have caused some to deny the composer's genuine religiosity and the authentic sacredness of his sacred works.

On the other hand, one commentator, speaking of the *Symphony of Psalms,* says, "The composer attains, in the last movement, to the love of God." But he too adds that in his later works Stravinsky "seems to be in love with the idea of God rather than with God himself."

Perhaps some clue to the supposed lack of sacredness of Stravinsky's sacred music can be found in two related facts: first, the difficulty alluded to above of finding some effective meaning in the sacred texts set in the Twelve-Tone or serial technique; and second, the obvious but sometimes overlooked fact that Stravinsky's music did not always reflect faithfully his aesthetic.

Aesthetic often follows intuitive creation, and, at least up to the 1920s, Stravinsky is no exception to the rule. Much has been made of the fact that he turned his back on the lush orchestral scores of his three greatest pieces for the theater, the ballets *Firebird* (1910), *Petrouchka* (1911), and the earthshaking *Rite of Spring* (1913), works which established him as the leader of the avant-garde before the catastrophe of World War I. But it must also be realized that during his five years' exile in Switzerland during and after the war, he made a virtue of necessity, writing for the small instrumental and vocal ensembles which were the only part left of the orchestras and opera and ballet companies of allied Europe. From this experience Stravinsky developed a musical aesthetic, which quickly became an artistic habiliment, of economy of means, stripping from his scores all purely expressive or extra-musical impedimenta, in favor of pure music and pure form.

Contrary to Wagner's avowed purpose of combining all the arts into the ultimate *Gesamtkunstwerk* emphasizing the drama, Stravinsky, even when writing for the stage or, more to our point, when setting sacred or other texts, declared his intention of keeping

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his music completely free ot expressive associations. Fortunately for us, Wagner's incredible symphonic genius defeated his purpose and gave us some of the most important symphonic development in all music from his operatic pit orchestra. Similarly, in spite of his protestations, Stravinsky, in dealing with sacred texts, often unconsciously followed the dictates of his enormous intuitive genius to give us works which, notwithstanding their formal or architectonic demands, do really touch us by their expressive rendering of the texts, and expose a profound religious feeling exuding through the surface of the austere music.

What of the mood of quiet religious fervor which runs throughout the Mass (1948); the majestic lengthening of the notes toward the end of the *Credo* at the words *catholicam, peccatorum,* and *mortuorum,* as if underscoring the composer's fellowship with the Catholic, the sinner, and the dead; the style, sanctioned by church use from the early Renaissance, of setting the longer texts in a declamatory, chordal fashion, while giving correspondingly more musical importance to the shorter texts? Stravinsky's total lack of tone painting of the Descent from Heaven, the Incarnation, etc., may detract from our traditional religious associations, but his music may not therefore be called irreligious or un-sacred. Finally, the unique wind orchestra to accompany the choir of men and boys gives the instrumental voices an essentially organistic quality which is more austerely liturgical than a full orchestra with strings. So many of these details were known instinctively by Stravinsky, or discovered in "working out the problems" of each work—as he put it—that it is impossible to predict what his genius will produce, or even to appreciate it after it has been heard.

And what of the *Symphony of Psalms?* Stravinsky dedicated it to "the glory of God," and we must take his word for this, or risk the guilt of rash judgment. The work is generally regarded as the greatest sacred composition of our century, and the last movement as one of the sublime religious expressions of all music.

While I find expressive passages in the first two movements, it is the third which affects one more immediately, possibly because of its comparatively traditional harmonies, and the sublime opening and closing *Alleluia-Laudate.* But equally effective is the joyous spiritual tone generated by the rapid monotone repetitions of the words *Laudate Dominum* within a metrically complex orchestral fabric. This is the movement wherein "the composer attains to the love of God." There can be no argument.

It is with the later, serial compositions, beginning with the *Canticum Sacrum* (1955), that Stravinsky sends us screaming out of the hall (or the church), doubting his religiosity and the sacredness of his work.

I confess that I am baffled as any listener at the over-organized, mathematical *Augenmusik* of the Twelve-Toners. I must hear it over and over, and study it assiduously, to begin to understand and appreciate it. I find it not only maddeningly cerebral and abstract, but at the same time too personal. It exhibits a subjectivism parallel to that in the hidden, unreasonable recesses of the psyche dredged up by the Freudians, and thus representative not only of Viennese depth psychology but of the whole Age of Anxiety in which we still live.

Picasso & Stravinsky by Cocteau

Accordingly, we cannot expect this music to strike us with a highly charged emotional message, but must patiently Commonweal, Issue July 23—C.T. on 6 hear and rehear it to see if it contains anything which we can like. And even if we do not in the end like it at all, we may not for that reason call it irreligious or un-sacred.

And sometimes if we try, we find things to admire, at least in the strict etymological sense of causing us wonder. For example, *Threni,* subtitled *Lamentationes Jeremiae Prophetae* (1958), is a strict serial work in which most of the time a loud tenor sings almost unsingable intervals in a tone-row against an equally loud trumpet or another tenor with a variation of the row. Yet, after several hearings, it is possible to develop a sort of sympathy for the loud, insistent, atonal laments of the Prophet, while at the same time an accompanying spoken declamation of the text gives the work a startling dramatic quality. Thus, the *Sprechchor* becomes, for Stravinsky, the counterpart of the old chanted Lamentations. Other moving elements include the unusual choral settings of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and, most affective, the end of the Fifth Elegy where four solo voices and the four choral voices end softly with the text, "Convert us, O Lord, to Thee, and we will be converted; renew our days, as from the beginning."

Dare we say that, in spite of techniques, the texts make the music holy? Or must the music always have the task of making the texts holier? In the end we must simply accept Stravinsky's sacred music in the serial style, or reject serialism out of hand. It is possible, and desirable, to make aesthetic judgments, without at the same time making moral or even ethical ones.

Perhaps in the case of Stravinsky, the greatest composer and one of the great intellectuals of our time, we could apply the paradigm of the true artist described by Maritain in his *Art and Scholasticism*:

> As a man's culture becomes more highly developed, and as the artist's perception of beauty becomes more profound, the more spiritual—and therefore evasive—must be the brilliance of the form which ravishes him.

The vision of the great man may have evaded us, too.

God only knows.

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BOOKS

A critical weathervane for religious winds from the East

The New Religions

JACOB NEEDLEMAN

Doubleday, $5.95

MICHAEL ZEIK

Needleman is a philosopher, an existentialist, with a high estimate of man's responsibility for man, and a low estimate of California religion, who went to San Francisco in 1962 and was converted.

He is now convinced that the trouble Western churches and synagogues find themselves in, is part and parcel of a spiritual explosion that will transform everything man has ever thought about God and human possibility. Western disillusionment with religion is, after all, a very *religious* disillusionment. (I agree with *that.*)

Now that certain teachers of real significance have come over to this country from Asia, Needleman is certain that the West is going to have to reappraise itself with an intensity that has not been equalled since the onset of the Scientific Revolution.

California is not merely America-ten-years-hence; it is most of all, "not Europe!" Europe, here, is equated with disembodied intelligence, mind unfettered by emotion, gathering the universe into the majestic sweep of its own categories. For somewhat mysterious reasons, California is experiential, California has not yet lost the cosmic. European intellectualism, to which the Eastern seaboard has already succumbed, is largely acosmic.

Before setting down six chapters about the more significant contemporary Eastern cults to hit this country—and they are fascinating chapters, I promise the reader that—Needleman points out a few crucial places where he thinks Western religion has gone wrong. Most of all, he thinks, the churches and synagogues have turned to psychiatry and to a scientific world-view just at the moment when the latter dropped their charisma. The emperor has no clothes on! But we are following the emperor! Many christs arise, and we prefer every one of them to Him.

So far so good. Then came the new Eastern cults. Needleman is great. He presents them more effectively, I am sure, than most of them could present themselves. But except for Zen Buddhism, and maybe Krishnamurti, which have a noble ring to them, however too-subtly-simple they are for the Eastern-seaboard mind to get into, the other cults are just not all that impressive. And I thought the less of Needleman, until, about 20 pages before the end of the book, he gives his own critique; and I realized that he was aware all along of most of the qualms and reservations I had in my own mind.

Just to give you a taste of these contemporary Eastern cults, take the fascinating story of Meher Baba. "There is no doubt of my being God personified," wrote Baba, an Indian mystic, who died in 1969, and whose followers now number in the thousands, in India and the West. "I am the Christ . . . I assert unequivocally that I am infinite consciousness; and I can make this assertion because I AM infinite consciousness. I am everything and I am beyond everything . . . Before me was Zoroaster, Krishna, Rama, Buddha, Jesus, and Mohammed . . . My present Avataric Form is the last Incarnation of this cycle of time, hence my manifestation will be the greatest."

O.k. I am not prepared to reject Meher Baba, merely because his claims are large. Very large. The claims of Jesus Christ are also large. It is now necessary to review the life and words of Baba and to compare them with the words and behavior of the founders of other world religions—not only Jesus, but Buddha and Confucius as well.

According to Baba and his followers, there are five "Perfect Masters," five God-realized souls, walking the earth in every generation. Fortunately for Baba, two of the five happened to live within 20 miles of his little village. The first, an old Muslim woman, Hazrat Babajan, recognized his divinity before he himself did. She kissed him on the forehead and instantly "ripped away the veil which separated him from his consciousness as the avatar of the present era." For the next nine months Baba experienced "thrills of indescribable bliss." But when he was met by Maharaj, another one of the World's Five "Perfect Masters," Maharaj picked up a stone and hit him hard on the very spot where Babajan had kissed him! This completed his reentry into the world of illusion, the everyday world.

His disciples explain that Baba always lived with a dual consciousness, divine and commonplace. They tell the story of the time he was approached for the customary embrace by one of his followers who happened to have a bad head cold. Baba was astonished at the man's effrontery. "While you are like this you would embrace Baba," he exclaimed, "and give him a cold too!"

In 1925, Baba ceased to speak. The rest of his life was lived in "the Silence." He communicated only through an alphabet board and with hand signs. Why the silence? In order to *break* it! Baba explained that the moment he broke his silence would be the most significant moment in the history of the human race. When he announced a darshan (a gathering of loved ones) to be held in April of 1969, many thought the moment had come. Baba, unfortunately, died before the darshan, and never broke silence. His followers await his word from the next world.

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What I have done is unfair. I haven't pointed out that Baba counselled American hippies to give up drugs, or that he urged and practiced charity to the poor. Nevertheless, the cult of Meher Baba, and many other of the cults described in the book, do not have the same nobility and authenticity for me as the movements or cultures initiated by such personalities as Buddha, Confucius, or Christ.

As I say, Needleman, himself, at the end of the book explains his own reservations, although he believes the spread of these Eastern cults to the West is a highly significant religious event. He is especially penetrating in his comment about Zen Buddhism, surely the most impressive of all of these contemporary spiritual imports.

Zen, he points out, is very necessary in certain oriental cultures as a counterweight to the unbridled metaphysical speculation and religious system-building of Mahayana Buddhism. But is it a salvific instrument in the hands of rootless Western man, already thoroughly anti-metaphysical and without any religious framework at all? My own reflection: just as stupid curial directives once required missionaries to turn Chinese into Europeans before they could become Christians, so many Americans try to become Japanese in order to become Zen Buddhists. It never worked the first time around; it won't work the second. The real Zen Buddhists, the Japanese monks (whom I found a very impressive group of men, when I visited that country) know this very well.

Needleman is sure, in conclusion, that the experience of Westerners, especially the young, with these Eastern spiritualities, is going to teach them some valid truths. To mention the two that particularly struck me: in trying to live up to the demands of these new cults, they are going to realize the necessity for "gradations" in religious life. Perhaps we have been too arrogant with the vast mediocrity of Christians. It may take the infinite compassion of Mahayana Buddhism to make us realize that the forces of resistance to spiritual growth in the individual are almost overwhelming, and that we should drive no man away because he is not yet a living Buddha or a living Christ.

Finally, Westerners studying Eastern spirituality are going to be impressed with the ascetic and moral demands made by most, though not all, Eastern sects. One will never make progress in meditation without the psychospiritual instrumentality of moral behavior. Just for openers, every single Eastern spiritual leader cited in the book denounced the use of drugs as some kind of technological shortcut to the absolute. Instant nirvana is just psychic masturbation.

The Angelica

MAY DIKEMAN

Little, Brown, $6.95

Lion Country

FREDERICK BUECHNER

Atheneum, $5.95

ROSEMARY F. DEEN

Thoreau once complained that "There is nowhere recorded a simple and irrepressible satisfaction with the gift of life, any memorable praise of God." May Dikeman's *Angelica* is not simple, perhaps not altogether memorable, but it aims to record that satisfaction with the gift of life that Thoreau thought was praise of God. To do this she creates a gentle, witty, lost protagonist, Jean, and gives her only the briefest of gifts.

"The numen of Jean's life was a pro-

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REVIEWERS

MICHAEL ZEIK teaches in the Oriental Studies Department at Marymount College in Tarrytown, N. Y.

ROSEMARY F. DEEN teaches in the English Department at Queens College.

RICHARD ELMAN's latest book is *An Education in Blood.*

VIRGINIA FREEHAFER is a free-lance writer specializing in Brazilian land reform.

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gram for averting contact." This instinct misplaces and mis-times her so that she exists in a kind of Julian calendar, always behind the time of actual living. She is taken out of this "life" of hopelessly tangled loose ends when she joins a "Peace and Freedom Movement" civil rights march led by Don Elliot. The march turns out to be as peripheral to any discernible civil rights action as her former life had been to any direct living, except that at the end of it Don abruptly asks her to marry him.

Jean exists not only in currents of action; but—as if the novel were really a film—in various lights or exposures. Light is a power. In the South, the marchers are "brained by sunshine as they march the gantlet of burning goldenrod"; the "glare" of Don's golden eyes makes them seem "self-luminous rather than reflective"; an event "turned a draft of light across the day that had been and whited it out." This action of light represents the strength or wealth of a character who has no assertive will, because it is the saving work of her consciousness. But this saving is tenuous. Jean needs someone "of her own" to tell her "trove of minor anecdote" to —a treasure which "if untold, by an inverse sea-change, would grind from small pearls to grains of sand, grotesquery sticking in the free siftings of the mind."

But the novelist is as hard as fate to Jean's natural desires. She gives her not enough love to get used to it as a belonging, only enough to experience as a kind of grace or gift. Unfortunately, this requires a good deal of contriving—mainly keeping the poor married lovers from making it together by a series of increasingly unlikely accidents and misunderstandings. There is the larger predicament of the main characters: their relation or lack of relation to the "Movement," to Blacks and Indians, to guns and revolution, to religion and the Establishment, and to sets of one-way characters, peculiarly bent and incomplete. Most of this seemed to me neither convincing nor interesting in the second half of the novel. Miss Dikeman's best effects are economical. For example, Don's mother, persistently in search of her creaturely satisfactions, complains that Don "cared for all alike! Now . . . that's not natural!" Jean contents herself with ironic agreement: "No, it's not natural."

Old complaints that Buechner is arty and contrived are cancelled by *Lion Country*. It is economically written, easy and humorous in the best way without any sacrifice of seriousness. Antonio Parr, the narrator, speculates about the possibility of exposing Leo Bebb as a religious charlatan. But Bebb, who dispenses ordinations, diplomas and tax exemption information on request from his church, Holy Love, and who has served a five-year jail term for sexual exhibitionism, has already, it is clear, exposed himself. The implications of this only slowly dawn on Parr as the novel unfolds.

" 'All things are lawful for me,' " says Bebb as he descends into the subway in the opening pages of the book, " 'but all things edify not.' One Corinthians ten." If the book asks where we see the love of God, it does not promise that all the possibilities will be edifying. A secularist might want to see it shut up in a special place: an established church, a respectable minister, a solemn ritual, an accepted canon. Anyone who won't acknowledge the opaqueness of the world to the spirit *may* see it in a concrete church in Armadillo, Fla., in apocryphal acts and humor, and in an ambiguous minister. *Maybe,* as Bebb says.

I remember a *Life* article a few years ago on a religious diploma mill operation that took a wise satisfaction in the life story of the plump "minister" looking out from the photographs. This is far from Buechner's masterful creation of the improbable genuineness of a latter-day apostle, a tarnished Daniel among the Babylonian lions of Fla. Through Parr, Buechner keeps us at a distance both from Bebb's conventional and his unconventional great moments: Bebb raising Brownie from the dead, Bebb's saintly response to the killing of his baby, and finally Bebb's restoring the rich Herman Redpath's sexual potency with prayer ("He is here that he may mount up in thy service like an eagle, so grant him the strength of a young man to mount with") and a manifestation of the "terrible mystery" itself.

The narrator occupies us at our distance from mystery with his own loves. Parr does better than par once, in his operatic reading of a tale from the Apocrypha about the Harrowing of Hell (in Parr's scenario, Jesus enters "like Don Giovanni, the great lover himself"); and he justifies Bebb's faith in the priest in every man by repeating this to his dying sister when her customary skeptical toughness momentarily gives way before the approach of death.

The stories about Bebb are given life by what we see and hear directly, especially his wonderful talk. It is local, idiomatic, but complex with that note of originality we recognize as someone's identity, the way we recognize Paul through any translation: "Yet to shame the wise, God has chosen what the world thinks is folly." Bebb has two notes: one sublime, " 'All things are lawful for me,' " and one tacky, "Everything I do is legal, Antonio." Once or twice they blend: "The love of God is a wizened little thing doesn't anybody want."

Both these novels refuse to make religious truth remote, "in the outskirts of the system, behind the farthest star." Religious truth, like any other, is present, though its presence is not natural and its expansions of law may not be edifying.

Freakshow

ALBERT GOLDMAN

Atheneum, $10

RICHARD ELMAN

Albert Goldman is one of those writers who is always getting off in pieces: a line here, a *shpritz* there, an insight snuck in between two expository lines as *shtick*. He writes about the entertainment world by way of being a standup Jewish intellectual, is irreverent about the rock scene, disillusioned by the sad plight of jazz, but always open to something new happening some-

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where ". . . if we could just find where the cats are blowing."

Much of *Freakshow* is a reprint of Goldman's column in *Life* magazine, and there are reprints from other sources as well, including one on Jewish humor that originally appeared in *Commonweal*, but what gets it all together is a barking, rasping, manic style that is a clue to the exhilarations of an enthusiastic fan. What Goldman digs he really digs, and he is also not afraid to accuse a performer of shamming inauthenticity. The late Janis Joplin is compared, at one point, to Miss Sophie Tucker, never mind all that stuff about her copping to Bessie Smith and Mama Thornton; and the comparison is so squalid and deprecatory of her various fans' press agentries that one has to take notice of the false currency and amateurism that sometimes passes for contemporary fame on the rock scene; yet when she dies a little while later of an apparent overdose Goldman is about the only critic honest enough to allow her this squalid ecstacy without coining alibis or making up excuses for poor Janis. He writes: "Dope was as essential to her myth as blues, booze and the frantic beat with which she tore out her heart. Whether she needed dope as a human being was beside the point. It was crucial to her act."

Or for sheer bravura evocation of mood consider this from the preface on Benny Goodman's clarinetist style which the daily *Times* critic found objectionable:

> I loved the way his needle-sharp clarinet cut with surgical accuracy through the hot sweaty flab of a swing band. I loved the squirting, spritzing, high-nozzle velocity of his style. His impatient, imperious attack. His trick of getting in there and getting out before you could get him in your sights. What difference did it make if he looked like your high school English teacher? Benny was thrilling.

Of course, this sort of thing is not so much criticism as the journalistic equivalent of the musical and entertainment phenomena it is describing, but Goldman can also be cool, analytic, and authoritative, as in quite the longest piece here, the encyclopedic essay on "The Emergence of Rock," and he is versatile enough to move from a discussion of Tiny Tim to some aperçus about *The Story of O*, giving each a propre weight, style, feel and decorum.

Goldman was the earliest and most articulate admirer of Lenny Bruce, and his essays on the master, as well as on the whole school of sickjew humor are illuminating when not being overly pedantic, but in these, as in all the best moments of *Freakshow*, it's the evident delight of the fan involved in the experience that comes through. Goldman lets himself be part of *The Freakshow*. He blew his cool a long while back as a poorly paid academic hack at Brooklyn College, Columbia, etc. If this sort of writing isn't criticism it has the good sense to be entertainment and when it does criticize it never minces words.

Miracle at Joaseiro

RALPH DELLA CAVA

Columbia U. Press, $9.95

Catholic Radicals in Brazil

EMANUEL DE KADT

Oxford U. Press, $9.75

VIRGINIA FREEHAFER

Radical church movements in Brazil were making great strides toward changing the nation's prevailing power structures until April 1964, when the military intervened. Since then leftist reformers have either had to sacrifice their organization's ideas and commitments, or they have been forced underground. In popular jargon one very prominent Northeast bishop is "on ice." Many priests have been jailed. Even so, the church is acknowledged to be the only remaining forum for opposing government policy.

Here are two excellent books on social protest in Brazil. They both provide necessary background material on a prevailing patron-client complex in rural areas and a monopoly land system under which dependent tenants and sharecroppers have labored for centuries without legal rights.

Within such a setting the *Miracle at Joaseiro* delineates a popular religious movement which took place during the early years of the Republican government. Thousands of deprived peasants from the Northeast droughtlands converged on the hamlet of Joaseiro in the fertile Cariry Valley of Ceará. Although the movement was one of protest against miserable living conditions, it was by no means rationally motivated. Its members were fanatical believers in the miracle-producing powers of the local chaplain, Father Cicero Romão Batista. Word spread that when Padre Cicero administered the host to one of his communicants, the white wafer on her tongue had turned red with "the precious blood of Christ."

The priest's refusal to deny the miracle resulted in his suspension by the Roman Catholic hierarchy. The Joaseiro church went underground. Forbidden to preach sermons, Padre Cicero's daily homilies before enormous crowds turned to instructing the masses on how to improve their situation. Under his

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guidance, the unclaimed lands on nearby hilltops were parceled out for farming. Peasants who had never known any condition other than subjection to the landlord, were encouraged to take up a trade. The author states that the priest "not only harnessed and mobilized labor, he also inculcated in these peasants the values requisite in a wage-earning economy. . . . Quite unintentionally, the cleric had become a key agent in the process of 'modernization.' . . ."

Padre Cicero acquired so many landed estates that he was given the honorific title "greatest colonel of the Brazilian Northeast." Under the patriarchal system of the backlands his political influence was a natural corollary. He could command the vote of his many thousand followers as well as call them to arms. There is no doubt that the defrocked priest could have led his devotees with their "clear potential for opposing the status quo" into social revolution. Instead he taught obedience and humility. The part played by his followers in the deposition of the state government is discussed in well-researched detail by della Cava who concludes that the movement "chose and was obliged to reintegrate itself into the traditional structures of the Brazilian nation."

Padre Cicero—"conservative, capitalist and paternalistic"—was a product of his era. In the half century which has intervened, there has been a vast change in church thinking. *Catholic Radicals in Brazil* analyzes in depth the reformist ideology of Catholic organizations during their most effective period in the early 1960's. The National Conference of Brazilian Bishops led the way. Under their auspices, the Northeast prelates met to discuss the socio-economic problems of their underdeveloped region. They openly protested the injustices accruing from Brazil's "political organization and system of private economy." *Acão Católica* took up the cause of various lay vehicles for social and political reform. Organized university students (JUC), convinced that their demands would not be respected without "basic restructuring of society," joined the Movement of Basic Education (MEB) and the extremely radical *Acão Popular* (AP).

All these groups were humanistically oriented, believing in the possibility of realizing a "non-dominant society." AP stressed the elimination of capitalism "which was leading the world into an impasse of ever-increasing alienation and domination, both within nations and between them." *Conscientizacão* became a key word in group activities. The resigned, inarticulate masses had to be made "conscious" of the problems which contributed to their present misery and of the possibilities for change. The most important instrument for promoting this awakening was the MEB adult literacy program by radio, with community leaders chosen as aides. There was to be no manipulation of the masses from the top down as had occurred with urban labor under "populist" presidents. Each participant was to do his own thinking and make his own political choices.

After the military coup, the Basic Education Movement changed tactics. Progressive leaders were forced to defer to the more numerous conservative bishops who took a firm hand. The primer *Viver é Lutar* with its emphasis on class struggle had been declared "subversive." It was replaced by one with a watered-down theme of peasant cooperation. DeKadt states, "The views that came to be officially sanctioned were the very antithesis of the pre-coup radicals."

Once again a popular movement had to accommodate to the mandates of an unyielding power structure. It was only because of its ties with the church that MEB survived at all. Other Catholic radical groups folded completely. *Açāo Popular* which was probably the purest expression of the Catholic Left was so violently repressed that it now exists only in fragmentary form waiting under clandestine conditions until it can once again take up its banner for the downtrodden masses.

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 371)

planation to us elders, and then a few days later his review in the *New York Times* of three recent books about revolution [May 9, 1971], I had to ask myself once more (though the question was long since settled), why *didn't* I go to jail? Things might have been much simpler had I done so with a group of very dear friends whom Mr. Scoblick mentioned in his lecture, identifying them simply as "The New York

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Eight": one of a number of groups who, pre-Steinfels, had been variously involved in war protest, but via the destruction of draft records.

So after the student-guest-faculty panel discussion was over I introduced myself to the former Father Scoblick as "the ninth member of the New York Eight," and asked him to take "love" to Dan and Phil: since the warden at the penitentiary in Danbury had prohibited both my visiting and my writing to the Berrigans.

Although I was still on hand the unforgettable night of the New York Eight's action, I had, after an intensive weekend of soul-searching with them, "copped out" without ever disclosing my basic reason for doing so: I am a homosexual priest. It is help to quote Steinfels again: "For some time it has become clear that the division of labor in the peace movement ought to be altered. The young, too, have their 'credibility gap'; and they can overcome it by channeling their activities closer to what, in these abnormal times, are commonly called 'normal' forms of protest."

To be a "former priest" (even one married to a "former nun") may not yet be quite "normal" but it no longer creates a credibility gap with the young. Indeed it sometimes seems to have the contrary effect, which may be one of the reasons why a student group at the (Catholic) university in question had invited this particular guest-speaker in the first place.

But to be either a "former homosexual" or, *a fortiori*, a "former homosexual priest" is at once more complex and can create very considerable credibility gaps irrespective of generation. Is such a person, first of all, still in fact homosexual and also still in fact a priest ("in good standing") or are the categories mutually exclusive? It is not a question for 5-year-olds! But the prevailing temper, even in the higher age-echelons, has recently been quite clearly stated by none less than the President of Columbia University. Responding in the negative to requests from a "Gay Group" for residence-hall lounge-space on campus, Dr. McGill replied: "I make a very sharp distinction between their political and social orientation on the one hand and their medical and psychiatric situation on the other."

Needless to say this is, from the GLF (Gay Liberation Front) point of view, sheer heresy: for psychiatrists are automatically establishment, whereas homosexuals are emphatically not "sick" and thus have no need of a physician, as the Gospel phrase goeth.

There is certain to be, therefore, some rebuttal to Dr. McGill's position; for the adjective "social" is, in his context, at least ambivalent if not necessarily bisexual.

As to my own dilemma, it ran somewhat as follows: In the event of arrest (the desideratum, as Steinfels explains) a certain amount of "investigation" would certainly precede any major trial. As was recently remarked in the public press, and not without a post-Portnoyesque humor, "if it is discovered at Harrisburg that either of the Berrigans ever masturbated in the fifth grade, they won't stand a chance." And if thus in the green wood?

I could not, then, subject them to the danger of "guilt by association." For while they were not in fact participants in the New York Eight action, their influence on it could hardly be a puzzle to any interested person. Neither could I "tarnish" the credibility of the action itself; which, once my "past" not to mention my present, were uncovered, the whole effect could easily be destroyed, as some wild exploit of a bunch of "freaks," to choose one of the more charitable synonyms.

When, some quarter of a century or more ago, I decided to seek ordination, I was paternally advised by one seminary rector never to disclose the fact that I am a musician. This proved in fact impossible; but as time went on, to be a priest-composer, for instance, while still more questionable than to be, say, a priest-physicist, was not quite fatal and one could survive. But as time has also gone along on other tracks, while there is in New York "a church for gay people" complete with gay minister, the Roman brand of Christianity has not yet answered in the affirmative a question posed in print by the book *Is Gay Good?* (Westminster Press, 1971: "A provocative symposium" on "Ethics, Theology, and Homosexuality.")

So while in fact emphatically "silenced" for preaching peace, and thus, I had naively thought, a logical candidate for public peace protests outside the pulpit, (being still at least technically "in good standing"), the growing sophistication of the times makes me on the contrary something of an albatross around the neck of *any* priestly or even professorial activity, not to mention such extravaganzas as the destruction of federal records.

I had to think of all this as I prepared last week to listen to the rarely performed "Four Songs, Opus 22" by Arnold Schoenberg at concerts of the New York Philharmonic, especially the last one, to a text from Rilke's *Book of Images* (translated by Stephen Spender and J. B. Leishman):

". . . Doors are still closing softly . . .
windows are not yet shaking, and
dust lies heavily.
But I can already sense the storm . . .
and hurtle away . . . and am all alone
in the great storm." PRIEST

(ED. NOTE: *The above author is a priest whose identity is known to the editors.*)

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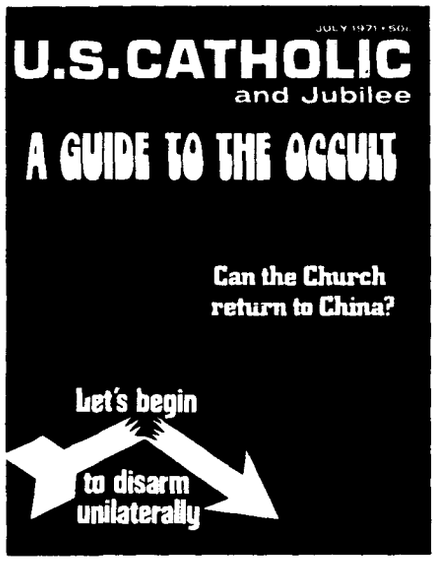

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